

Living in Balance

Fall 2005

The International Newsletter of Workaholics Anonymous

Experiences from the 2005 Conference

A Community of Recovery

This was my third WA conference and I had a great time. I've spoken to some WA members who have never attended a conference and thought it was all business. But it was far from that!

The whole event overflowed with joy and playfulness. The first night we arrived, many of us adorned ourselves with temporary "glitter tattoos." Some members brought funny hats, which they wore for most of the conference. In addition, conference organizers made available a wide variety of art supplies, including the long, narrow balloons that some attendees were able to fashion into animals or playful hats.

Most of my time was spent getting to know my fellow recovering workaholics, relaxing as I walked through the forest, and hearing the different experiences of WA's from all walks of life. We had a workshop on artistic approaches to the twelve steps, where I drew pictures symbolizing my powerlessness, created an art project representing my higher power, and enjoyed watching others explore their creativity. Saturday night we were treated to some stand-up comedy from a WA member, clapped and cheered as the winning bidders of the silent auction claimed their booty, and played organized games.

I skipped some of the meetings to sit by myself in the forest and take a nap. I was encouraged to participate as little or as much as I was able. My favorite part was the meals—served family style. Each mealtime I sat with different people, catching up with people who now feel like "old friends" from previous conferences, and getting to know others who were attending for the first time.

The people I've met at the conferences I've attended are now an integral part of my recovery. I have phone numbers and email addresses from WA's all over the US (and some other countries). I continue to stay in touch with these people and bring their experience, strength, and hope to the members of my small, 4-person meeting. I definitely plan to attend next year.

WA Book of Recovery

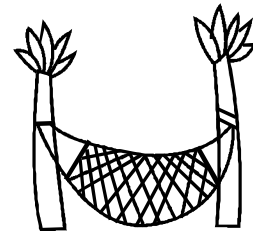
Now Available!

Thanks to the service of the Big Book and Literature Committees, and to all the WA members who submitted writings of their experience in recovery, the WA Book of Recovery is now available through mail order.

Please see the mail order form at the end of this newsletter. Order forms are also available on our website at http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org/book_of_recovery.html.

Consider ordering books to have on hand for newcomers to your meeting, and to donate to local libraries or hospitals to help carry the message of hope to workaholics who still suffer.

The book includes many of the materials that have been circulating among us for years, including "Signposts of Workaholism" and "Characteristics of Recovery," as well as new materials such as personal stories, a step study guide with stories about working each step, "The Gifts of Rest" and a short history of Workaholics Anonymous.



In This Issue

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Open Board Positions

Perfection not Required!

Please consider if you could "substitute out" something from your schedule to serve on the Workaholics Anonymous Board. You don't have to have perfect recovery to help out. Most Board positions require a year of recovery in WA and having "achieved a measure of recovery from workaholism."

If you would like to help without taking on a formal position, or would like a one-time task, WA has plenty of opportunities. You could help with the literature committee, the newsletter, or with planning for the upcoming 2006 conference. Email WSO@workaholics-anonymous.org for more information. Please specify in your email what interests you most and be realistic about how much time you have.

Service is a great way to meet other WA's committed to recovery and to expand your circle of support

Open Board Position: Treasurer

The treasurer's job entails about one hour of work per week, in addition to attending WA Board meeting calls, which are two hours each quarter, or occasionally more often. Most of the time, the treasurer's tasks are not time-sensitive and can be once a week or once every few weeks.

Duties include depositing checks, paying bills, maintaining income and spending records for WSO, producing treasurer's reports, responding to emails, and writing and sending thank you notes/receipts for donations. The treasurer also keeps duplicate records of special projects that involve financial issues (i.e. Founder's Club donations, conference registrations). The treasurer keeps WA-WSO's filing status current with the State of California and files or oversees the filing of annual IRS forms.

Members qualified for board service should have a minimum of one year in Workaholics Anonymous and "shall be workaholics who in their own lives have achieved a measure of recovery from workaholism through embracing the steps, tools and principles of WA." (WA bylaws)

If you are interested in finding out more about this position so you can determine if it would benefit your recovery, Email treasurer@workaholics-anonymous.org.

About Workaholics Anonymous

Workaholics Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who share their experience, strength, and hope with each other that they may solve their common problems and help others to recover from workaholism. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop working compulsively. There are no dues or fees for WA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. WA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stop working compulsively and to carry the message of recovery to workaholics who still suffer.

Workaholics Anonymous

World Service Organization

PO Box 289

Menlo Park, California 94026-0289

510-273-9253

WSO@workaholic--anonymous.org

<http://www.workaholics-anonymous.org>

Open Board Position: Literature Services

4-6 Hours per Month

WA is looking for a new literature services coordinator.

This person serves on the literature committee, helps guide the writing, publication, and distribution of WA literature, and brings board reports to the literature committee. You would attend monthly literature committee conference calls and quarterly board conference calls, and get to know some great WA members. The chair of the Big Book committee is a separate position and is not vacant. Email WSO@workaholics-anonymous.org for more information.

Please Contribute to the WA Newsletter

Any WA member is welcome to submit their writings about recovery from workaholism. Submissions become the property of WA and may be edited. Email your contribution to newsletter@workaholics-anonymous.org

Step Eleven in Workaholics Anonymous

(Excerpted from the draft Big Book)

Sought through prayer and meditation to increase our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.

Prayer and meditation are our main source of conscious contact with our Higher Power, the God of our understanding. How can we turn our will over without knowing what God's guidance will be for us? We workaholics can struggle with this Step. For many of us, in the beginning, if we pray at all, our prayers are quick, desperate requests for help. We think there is never enough time to meditate. We have little patience for sitting still. Our mind, in the silence of meditation, is undisciplined and the "to do" list or self-critic takes over. In the beginning we might think meditation is the skill of mystics. For those of us in recovery who, for whatever reason or belief, have not come to experience a personal relationship with the Loving Spirit of our understanding, this is the next Step. The result is the promised spiritual awakening.

Our willingness to practice meditation and prayer began our most healing and soothing experiences known in recovery. With practice and patience we have come to know our time of conscious contact as a relief from our critical, effort-filled minds and our toxic bodies. We incorporate it as a daily part of our Action Plan. We find we need the light and love of our contact with our Higher Power. We discover the nourishment of and guidance of that contact. It is good for our minds, bodies and soul.

Our breath is our connection to the sacred and our body temple. It relaxes us and prepares us to be uplifted and held by spiritual energy. It helps to imagine being in a beautiful place in nature. In time we learn to quiet our mind and relax our body.

The other hazard facing us is unconsciously projecting our will in a meditation into the search for God's will. How do we guard against using "well-intended unconscious rationalizations" for behaviors we want to justify? Perhaps the best answer is we use discernment. Before making big decisions, we use our imagination, rehearsing the outcome of big decisions for a time of discernment we check our physical body's reaction it is a great truth teller. We discuss our situation with our sponsor or a spiritual advisor. We grow to trust the wisdom we experience in meditation when we experience love and forgiveness

Meditation helps us see the bigger picture, what is really important--things such as charity, truth, justice, and love. We find ourselves feeling chosen and special, a child of God. We belong to something greater than the small world of our work. The hostility of human affairs becomes less important. We find peace of mind.

New Telephone Meetings!

New telephone meetings have started up twice a week. These are just like regular meetings but over the telephone. The meetings are open to anyone with a desire to stop working compulsively or who thinks they may have a problem with workaholism. Mark your calendar and enjoy a meeting from the comfort of your own home, whether you live in a location with no local meetings, missed your local meeting this week, or need more meetings to support your recovery.

Meeting times: Thursdays at 9:00PM Eastern Time, **Saturdays** at 2:00PM Eastern Time. Don't live in US Eastern Time? Find the corresponding time for your time zone at <http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>. Meetings last for about 1.5 hours, but that may change based on group conscience.

The telephone number changes periodically. To obtain the phone number or for more information about this meeting, go to <http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/waphoneannounce>.



Who comes into WA and who does not?

This fascinating question has plagued all of the twelve step programs. Bill W. and Bob spent years trying to find the key to attraction rather than promotion. The Workaholics Anonymous (WA) program follows the twelve steps and traditions, but that is no guarantee of success. Recovery programs which follow the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) model share common issues of resistance such as denial, fear, pride, ego, shame, identity, control, and so on.

WA is relatively new. Although there are meetings in many of our major cities in the USA, and in some other nations, it is still a small gathering. Where are the people, and why hasn't it caught on more widely? We know they are out there because we were just like them. People inquire about WA steadily, and new members come in from time to time. Writers, authors and newspapers have written dozens of books, articles and stories.

A major factor is strong cultural acceptance, encouragement and praise of work. More is better. How can it be a problem? Another clear contributor is that there has not been an official text such as the "Big Book" of Alcoholics Anonymous. Now in preparation, the WA book will contribute to attraction. Are there other reasons peculiar to WA? Perhaps. Members of WA have come through some particular moment of awareness in their lives. They finally make a connection between perceived problems and work. Work was much too important to them, and dominated their value systems obsessively.

I fit this outline. While making good progress in another program for several years, it finally dawned on me that I had a work issue outside of what that other program covered. Connecting with a WA meeting and reading the literature opened a window of reality I had missed. I lived to work. I did not work to live. How could I have missed it? Already retired, work still topped my list of what was important! I was a real loner and very busy working, mentally and emotionally working, even when not at work. I was married to my job, and carrying on an affair with my family!

Where are the workaholics who are still out there and don't know it? First of all, many of them *do* know it. Others don't admit it at all, but have a vague sense that something about work, or excessive activity of some kind, is not right. Many are told by others flat out that they are workaholic and ignore it for all the usual reasons, plus one more: unadmitted workaholics are panicked by even a hint that work is a big problem. To them, work is life itself. Addressing work as a problem seems like something suicidal. *It is that extreme.* Interfering with work would be a visceral threat.

I suggest that in his or her heart of hearts a workaholic really wants what they get from work – ahead of face time with family, recreation, or hobbies. Some workaholics look forward to Mondays when they can get back to their *real* world. Where is the dividing line between healthy work and unhealthy affliction? Only the afflicted can judge that. When we workaholics face ourselves in the mirror and deal with the simple 20 WA questions honestly, we know. The trouble at that point may be that our workaholic way of life is without a desired alternative way of life. Work to live or work to be? I was my work. My work was me.

Work has its own, special allures. Work can be fascinating, interesting, dynamic, challenging, productive, creative, remunerative, profitable, satisfying, stimulating, frustrating, demanding, responsive, ego enhancing, gratifying, and socially interesting. Team efforts can be rewarding, give pride in accomplishment, gain praise from a job well done, and yield leadership satisfaction. Last but not least, work can offer power and control opportunities. Work can also be *seductive* in a romantic way, and very powerful. I now know that my worship of work (or serious activity in almost any form) is way overdone. But this is now, with some recovery. Not all hard work is workaholic. Only the worker really knows, and only if he is asking himself honestly. We usually need help through a recovery program to do that.



My Experience of Workaholism

I have come to understand that workaholism is an illness of addiction. By this I mean that I am a victim of an illness that typically is progressive. I have a form of mental illness in which I repeat activities which harm myself and others, even when I desperately try to do otherwise. My experience is that workaholism is not a moral defect that can be overcome with greater willpower. I am not responsible for having this illness, but nevertheless I am responsible for my actions and my attitudes.

Paradoxically it seems that the progression of the illness results from my efforts to control my addiction. More and more addictive behavior becomes necessary to cope with the feelings that arise within me. This addictive behavior can take the form of more and more activity or paradoxically from avoiding activity. Either more activity or less activity can take my attention away from my difficult feelings and issues in living my life.

Fortunately, Workaholics Anonymous has helped me to find a program, fellowship, and spirituality to help me recover from my addiction. The fellowship helps with the terrible loneliness that comes from trying to fight this illness by myself. The program provides steps for recovery. Spirituality provides guidance from a power greater than myself. Together they have transformed my life.

Sample Outreach Letter

The Flagstaff, Arizona WA group submitted this example of a letter they plan to send to all the counselors, pastors, parish nurses, EAP offices, etc., in their area accompanied by an outreach poster. Feel free to use this example for your own outreach materials.

Dear Friends in the Recovery Community and the Pastoral, Counseling, and Psychotherapy Communities:

We would appreciate your helping us "get the word out" that there is still an ongoing, active fellowship of Workaholics Anonymous in Flagstaff.

Workaholics Anonymous is a 12-Step self-help program based on the successful recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Its purpose is to help those who suffer from compulsive work behaviors, including not only job-related activity but all types of workaholism, compulsive "busyness", and morbid worry about self-worth.

Founded nationally in 1983, Workaholics Anonymous is open to everyone who wishes to stop working compulsively and desires support for becoming a "human being" instead of a "human doing". The principle of anonymity is followed strictly, and there are no dues or fees for attending meetings.

The group in Flagstaff meets [Tuesdays at 5:30 pm at the Religious Society of Friends Meeting House at 402 S. Beaver, just below Butler Avenue. For more information contact [local contact name and numbers].

We are enclosing a flyer suitable for posting, and can provide you with copies of program literature if you wish. Feel free to make additional copies, and to contact [local contact] if you have any questions.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,
The Flagstaff W.A. Fellowship

Claude's Story, Part Two

(Continued from the Spring 2004 edition of Living in Balance)

I believe that my father was not able to stand in confrontation with my mother. But both my parents were not able to accept this fact. My father chose to escape into a big project: he started to build a house. The unusual aspects of this building project included that my parents did not have the money to build a new house and that the building site for the new house was 600 kilometers from where we lived. Everyone in my family realized that my father could only build this house with an enormous output of energy. My father always told us that he was building this house for us—for his wife and his children. But the truth is that he built the house mainly for himself.

From the beginning, the project of building a new house served the primary purpose of allowing my father to escape from my mother, to avoid feeling the emotional distance he experienced from her. I feel that this project was perfect for his workaholism, because the house-building project cannibalized his personal and financial possibilities for decades.

After a holiday in the Bavarian forest, my father bought the land for the building. At first he claimed the land purchase was a financial investment. But this was a lie. Once my mother understood the extent of the undertaking, that my father was really going to build this faraway house, she fought against the project. The plan became real as my father contacted his architect friend and the plan grew on paper.

Before the start of construction, my mother had a nervous breakdown. At the time I was just entering second grade. The psychologist told my father if he wanted to rescue his marriage and the health of my mother, he should cancel the plans to build the new house. At the time, he said he would give up on building the house. But in fact, he continued to follow his plan. As a young child, I had no choice. Every weekend I traveled the 1,200 kilometers with my father—first to cut the trees on the wild grounds, later to dig the foundation for the house.

The older I grew, the more I was able to help my father. To fulfill my role of the "perfect son," I learned to help in all aspects of the house construction. At the same time, I tried to perfect my skills as mediator between my parents. My mother started to accept the project. She was not able, with her psychological challenges, to take action or divorce her husband. At the same time, she used the project to work against the nerves of my dad. During this time there was immense aggression and violence in the mood of my family life.

Surprisingly, over time, the project of house building was not my parents' project. They did not carry the weight of the project. My biggest wish during this time was to complete the house in the shortest amount of time. So I worked hard as a teenager during school holidays on the building area. The dysfunctional situation transformed in this way. I became the manager of the building construction instead of my father.

I had the naïve idea that if the house were finished, my parents would again love each other. I didn't realize that the project was not the real reason for the conflict in my family. My father had no interest in actually building and completing the house. His management was very often chaotic, so I tried as a dutiful son to correct his decisions and actions. (Just to be clear, I am now thirty-seven years old and the house is still not completed!) I now realize, in his mind, his aim was not to finish the project; his goal was to avoid feeling the damage and pain in our family system.

My relationship with other teenagers during these years was not very good. I was not able to establish romantic interests or relationships, which usually flourish for people at that age. I felt shame about my inability to connect with my peers, but I fought against this shame by plunging into my own workaholism. I focused on building the house, as I felt it was my job. My performance at school suffered, but I did well enough to graduate from high school. When I was 17, I realized that the house-building project was really a tool for my father to escape the need to come into real contact with my mother. I stopped driving into the Bavarian forests and helping my father to build the house. There were different factors that were important to me to draw a boundary between my parents and myself in a healthy way....

(Part 3 will appear in a future edition of Living in Balance)

Newsletter Subscription Form

Please enclose (sliding scale) \$8 to \$20 payable to WA World Service Organization and mail to Treasurer, WA WSO, PO Box 289, Menlo Park, California, 94026-0289.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone (optional, in case there are problems with the address or payment): _____



Seventh Tradition Form

Please enclose your group's contribution and mail to: Treasurer, WA WSO, PO Box 289, Menlo Park, California, 94026-0289.

Group Name: _____

City, State: _____ Meeting Day and Time: _____

Help Choose the Future WA Logo!

Vote by November 14, 2005

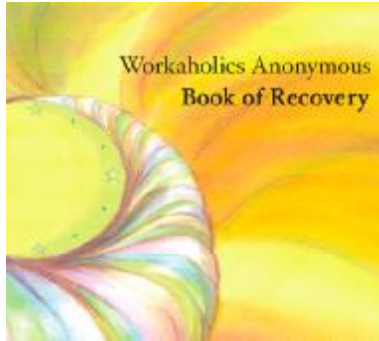
Workaholics Anonymous is in the process of deciding on a logo. As members of WA, you can help decide what this logo will be. Please, only one vote per WA member. Email the number (1A, 1B, 2, or 3) corresponding to the logo you prefer to outreach@workaholics-anonymous.org by November 14, 2005.

1A

1B

2

3



Workaholics Anonymous Book of Recovery Order Form

The W.A. Book of Recovery is chock full of member stories, helpful literature, information about the tools and principles, and W.A. basics. It also includes a Step Study Guide—everything in one place to spread the message of recovery!

Name

Mailing Address

Phone Number/Email

Yes, I would like to order the following number of W.A. Books of Recovery:

Number of Books _____	
Times Cost of Books @ \$15 each:	\$
Shipping and Handling <i>(See chart below)</i>	\$
Total Enclosed	\$

US SHIPPING	US Postal Service Priority Mail
1-2 Books	\$4 total
3-10 Books	\$8 total
CANADA AND MEXICO	US Postal Service Global Priority
1-4 Books	\$7 total
INTERNATIONAL	US Postal Service Global Priority
1-4 Books	\$9 total

Mail this order form with your check or money order in \$US made out to Workaholics Anonymous at the following (please send book orders only to this address):
WORKAHOLICS ANONYMOUS, PO BOX 56416,
PORTLAND, OR 97238. attn: BOOK OF RECOVERY.
 Allow up to four weeks for delivery.

Thank you!

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Date Received	Check No.	Payment Amt.	Date Sent	Scan & Send	InventoryID